

Vincente Martinez Adobe
Pleasant Hill and Franklin Canyon Roads
Martinez, Contra Costa County

HABS No. CAL-1913

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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VICENTE MARTINEZ ADOBE

Martinez, Contra Costa County, California

ADDRESS: Pleasant Hill and Franklin Canyon Road
OWNER: Mr. and Mrs. Louis L. Stein (Being transferred to
National Park Service as a National Monument)
OCCUPANT: John Muir Association
USE: Residence - Museum

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

One of the earliest existing examples of adobe houses built in the Martinez vicinity. Vicente Martinez, the son of Ygnacio Martinez, inherited this portion of Rancho El Pinole, and about 1846 built an earlier small "frame" house at the mouth of Franklin Canyon near the site of the present house. In the fall of 1848 or 1849 he constructed the present adobe residence. He sold the house to Edward Franklin in 1853 but continued to reside in the valley the remaining portion of his life.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1874, Dr. John T. Strentzel purchased the ranch properties which included this house, and in 1881-82 built the mansion (CAL-1890) now known as the John Muir Home on the small hill to the eastward. He continued to add to his ranch holdings until 1890 when the total acreage amounted to 2,665 acres; the adobe house was evidently used as the headquarters for the ranch managers. After 1884, the ranch was under the direction of Strentzel's son-in-law, John Muir. Following

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the death of Dr. Strentzel in 1890, the ownership was in the name of his wife, Louisiana E. Strentzel, and for about a decade, beginning in 1906, the adobe house was the home of the family of John Muir's daughter, Mrs. Wanda Muir Hanna. In 1955 it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Louis L. Stein, and is presently being shown to the public during certain hours of the week by caretakers of the John Muir Association.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The building is a rectangular, two-story adobe structure with open wood porches on the east (front) and south sides. To the west there are wood frame additions which include kitchen, bedroom and bath, and a laundry room.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: The original two-story truncated rectilinear portion is 44'-6" long and 19'-0" to 21'-5" wide. The kitchen-bedroom addition is approximately 12' x 52' plus the added 10' x 11' laundry wing.

Foundations: Though not visible above ground, there is evidently a foundation of rough stonework over which the adobe walls were built.

Wall Construction: In the original rectangular portion, the walls, 24" to 30" in thickness, are built of sun-dried adobe bricks. The exterior walls are plastered on the east side and upper portion of the west; the south wall is covered with vertical boarding and the north wall with horizontal siding. Originally there were probably fireplaces at the north end on both floors, but these and the upper north wall were evidently damaged in the earthquake of 1906. The present fireplace on the first floor and the chimney were rebuilt at this time and the upper north wall was built in wood frame.

Porch: On the east (front) side at the first and second levels there are porches, 4'-3" in width, extending the length of the house. The lower porch floor, probably originally of wood, is now of reinforced concrete, red in color. There are seven wood post columns across the front. On the lower porch these are 6" x 6"

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On the ground level oak flooring has been placed over the original wood floor. The wood flooring on the upper level is original.

Doorways, Doors and Trim: Almost all door openings through the thick adobe walls are splayed on the sides. Wood lintels are plastered over and are not visible. Doors are about 6'-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " clear opening and variable in width. Door frames - plain, no mouldings.

SITE

The house is located on ground that slopes toward Franklin Creek, the east boundary of the 3.857 acre tract. Fruit and nut trees, many planted in the last century by horticulturist, Dr. John Strentzel, surround the house. A graveled drive enters from Franklin Canyon Road at the northwest corner of the tract and continues along the north boundary to connect with an unpaved road that leads to the John Muir Home.

REFERENCE

FEASIBILITY REPORT, JOHN MUIR HOME AND VICENTE MARTINEZ ADOBE, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Western Regional Office. Prepared by Messrs, John Hussey, Ronald N. Montimore, Charles S. Pope, A. Lewis Koue and John Wosky.

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square at the bottom shaped to an octagonal form, and those on the upper porch are similar but are formed of 4" x 4" timbers. The capitals at both levels are formed of simple octagonal blocks and quarter round moulding. The porches continue around to the south side with a width of about 8'. The post columns do not have capitals as do those on the east porches. Ceiling of porches are finished in V-boarding.

Doorways, Doors and Windows: On the lower floor the trim is wide, usually 1 x 6 without mouldings; on the upper floor the trim of openings is finished with pilaster-like capitals on either side. The double-hung wood windows on the lower floor frequently have wood panels below to match the door openings. Doors are wood paneled, half glazed. The thick walls are usually splayed inward at the door and window openings and the splay is finished in plaster. Windows on the upper level are casement, opening to the floor and serve as doors to the porch.

Roof - Shape and Covering: The rectangular adobe portion has a hipped roof that has variable pitch to accommodate the truncated plan form. Porch roofs are low pitched. There is a small decorative ridge gable over a portion of the south porch. The frame kitchen - bedroom addition is roofed with shed roofs and the laundry has a simple ridged gable roof. All roofs are now covered with composition shingles or roll roofing material. It is probable that the original adobe section was formerly roofed with wood shingles.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan: The plan of the original portion consists of two rooms on each floor. An adobe wall separates the rooms at both levels. A frame stair in the north, larger room (parlor) leads to the upper bedrooms. Closets of wood frame construction have been added on the upper floor.

Finish - Walls, Ceilings, Floors: Walls throughout the original portion are plaster finish. Earlier the ceiling joists in all rooms were exposed but the ceilings of all rooms except the south bedroom on the upper level have been finished with gypsum board. In the upper south bedroom the 3" x 5" joists are spaced 27" apart.